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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa Te Rau Herenga O Aotearoa (LIANZA) has mobilized the library and information profession in New Zealand to present key messages to the new government which describe a vision of how an integrated National Information Strategy (NIS) will help the government to realize some of the benefits of a knowledge led world. Highlights include: (1) the LIANZA Information Policy Summit (LIPS), held in December 1999, at which representatives of the library profession met to negotiate key messages from the profession that were delivered to the government; (2) the three main components in the New Zealand NIS model, i.e., knowledge access, knowledge resources, and knowledge equity; (3) comparison with the United Kingdom's NIS; (4) LIANZA activities planned for June/July 2000, including an extensive lobbying campaign to progress the NIS and a second LIPS (LIPS2); (5) LIANZA initiatives within the library profession; and (6) common themes in the changing workplace. (MES)

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WATCH OUR LIPS!: NEW SKILLS AND SERVICES FOR THE KNOWLEDGE AGE

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Introduction

As countries work to develop strategies to help them to realise the economic, social and political benefits of becoming a society which is knowledge based, librarians and other knowledge workers are the pivotal professional group able to assist government to realise these aims. This paper describes how the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa Te Rau Herenga O Aotearoa (LIANZA) has mobilised the library and information profession in NZ to present key messages to the new Government which describe a vision of how an integrated National Information Strategy(NIS)will help the Government to realise some of the benefits of this knowledge led world. Critical to the Association's campaign has been to draw these key messages and vision back into practical changes in the modern workplace. At the LIANZA Information Policy Summit (LIPS) held in Dec 1999 representatives of the library profession met to negotiate key messages from the profession which were then delivered to the Government. It was important for these messages to be picked up in a practical way by librarians, so this is also a story of how a national strategy is being implemented in practice in the workplace. Key strategists from outside of NZ are being invited by the National Library of NZ and LIANZA to advise the Government and the library profession on aspects of the national strategy. For example ***Knowledge Equity***, which includes information literacy, is one of the cornerstones of the National Information Strategy and librarians in all sectors throughout NZ are debating the issues and changing their practice in this area. There are new skills and services being developed in our libraries to maximise the potential of the knowledge age. In my view, to be effective these changes should be strongly linked by a national strategy.

While each country will have its own social and political environment the essential issues are the same, so as I take you through the NZ case study I invite you to draw parallels with your own countries.

Watch our LIPS !

Yes, it was a tacky title but it certainly caught the attention of the media! By inviting the Government to **"Watch our (LIANZA Information Policy Summit) LIPS ! Messages to the new Government"** the profession took the initiative and developed a vision which positioned the sector as the prime initiator in the development of a National Information Strategy for NZ. Representatives from all library sectors attended the summit, which was small (50 people) but effective. The most encouraging outcome of the summit was the high degree of agreement reached on the major issues. The LIPS messages were each linked to current government policies and demonstrated how the library profession and an integrated National Information Strategy could help the Government deliver these policies. LIPS was an opportunity that the library profession in NZ had been wanting for some time. It gave the profession a focus and delivered a vision of how the sector could contribute at a national level. The LIPS messages can be accessed on LIANZA's web site: www.lianza.org.nz

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A National Information Strategy for New Zealand

As a direct outcome from LIPS during the early months of this year there has been extensive consultation with the library profession in NZ to develop the LIPS messages into a National Information Strategy for the Government to consider. Prior to this point, the previous Government's efforts to develop a strategy which would help NZ realise the benefits of a knowledge-led world had been

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disappointing and very superficial. The National Government's Bright Futures 5 Steps Strategy was criticised by most education and research interests. It encouraged one sharp tongued journalist, Jenny Chamberlain from North and South and previously a librarian, to reflect "Why does the Government's 5 steps to a knowledge economy sound about as likely to deliver as 'Firm Thighs in Fourteen Days'?" (*North & South*, Oct 1999)

In contrast, the new Labour Government is making more appropriate statements; however they realise, as does LIANZA, that a more co-ordinated approach across several Government ministries is needed if these policies are to be effective.

There is nothing remarkable about the National Information Strategy model we are working with at the moment. Librarians will be very familiar with the main components we have identified. The strategy will be effective if the Government takes an integrated approach with co-operation and co-ordination across several ministries. As always there will be ego and power issues to resolve, but few people are likely to argue with the basic principles.

The Model: A first draft
(refer to 3 Power Point slides in Appendices)

There are three main components or building blocks in the NZ model:

1. Knowledge Access
This is about connectivity and the need for an integrated information technology infrastructure in a county. It assumes that a citizen in Invercargill in the far south of NZ will have the same access capability to Information Technology as a citizen in Wellington, the capital city.
Knowledge access fits well with two key Government policy areas relating to social and educational equity ("Closing the (social) Gaps" and the "Digital Divide").

2. Knowledge Resources
This looks at the knowledge base of the country and asks what information resources are freely available to citizens either through government funded agencies (including tertiary learning and research institutions) or Local Authority organisations.

The Knowledge Resources section of the strategy fits well with the present Government's initiatives in e-government and e-citizens, designed to make Government information more accessible to citizens. In the recent budget there has strengthening of funding for research and for the National Library of NZ. The Government is also signalling its intention to encourage more co-operation between tertiary providers. For a country which has just surfaced from a highly competitive, "let market dictate" regime, it could make interesting watching as Universities and Institutes of Technology adjust to the new environment! Resource sharing across sectors and organisations is likely to be encouraged.

3. Knowledge Equity
Knowledge equity is fundamental to the success of a National Information Strategy. It is based on the assumption that unless citizens are literate and information literate, they will be disenfranchised from many of the benefits of a knowledge society. A country which has a robust and integrated IT infrastructure and excellent knowledge resources for its citizens is not delivering on its information strategy if there are significant numbers who cannot read or read or write or access information.

The current New Zealand Government claims to be strong in this area of social policy. The Ministry of Education's Literacy Taskforce and the likely introduction of new legislation designed to close the social gap in many areas of social and educational equity suggest that good progress could be made. The challenge for the library profession in NZ will be to raise awareness of the importance of information literacy and technology skills as part of the literacy package.

International Comparisons
Some of you will be familiar with other countries' efforts to develop National Information Strategies. We have watched developments from *The Keystone for the Information Age: a National Information*

Policy for the UK April 2000 with interest. The three components of the UK model of Connectivity, Content, and Capability compare closely with Knowledge Access, Knowledge Resources and Knowledge Equity in the NZ strategy.

(Refer to Power Point slides in appendices)

The lobbying, the politics
During June/July 2000 LIANZA will be involved in an extensive lobbying campaign to progress the National Information Strategy. Progress so far has been promising, with a senior cabinet Minister offering to broker the concept with his cabinet colleagues. He is promoting a national summit involving key ministers including:

Education
Science and Research
Information Technology
Local Government
Communications
National Library of NZ
State Services (e-government)
Art, Culture and Heritage

The Minister with responsibility for the National Library of New Zealand will involve the National Library's Policy Secretariat (which has a policy advisory role to government) in drafting the National Information Strategy.

There will be a LIPS2! On the 27th July 2000 there will be another LIANZA summit to develop briefing papers in areas where we feel the library profession can advise the Government most effectively.

Topics of papers currently being prepared include:

- e-government / e-citizens
- a national consortium for data base purchase
- science and research information
- literacy and information literacy
- Local Government Act (redefining public good in public libraries)
- national resource audit
- Technology infrastructure including public Internet access

From strategy to action: using information literacy as a case study
So far in this paper I have talked about a macro strategy which is all encompassing and affects many aspects of Government and professions and sectors beyond library and knowledge workers. I have done this because I think it is important to put our own individual initiatives and developments within our own workplaces into a broader strategic and political context. In my view it adds purpose to our developments and encourages us to look outside of our own social, cultural, professional and political constructs and see the broader issues.

We have focussed on aspects of information literacy today, so I want to use information literacy as a case study and highlight how LIANZA is actively working on practical delivery strategies as well as lobbying for the broader issues involved in a National Information Strategy.

The following initiatives illustrate that while LIANZA is lobbying the Government on a national level, the Association is active in raising issues and debate within the library profession.

Some initiatives

- LIANZA establishes Information Literacy Working Party. The 1998 Working Party reports in May 2000 Library Life, the whole issue is devoted to Information Literacy.

- LIANZA Otago/Southland Weekend School Jan 2000. The main topic addressed is information literacy
- LIPS 2 July 2000. Briefing paper for Government prepared by the Information Literacy Working Party including an argument for strengthening the definition of information literacy in the schools' core curriculum
- The National Library of New Zealand in association with LIANZA brings key strategists to NZ to advise Government and the library profession on aspects of the National Information Strategy. July 2000: Information Literacy with Patricia Senn Breivik
- LIANZA prepares a submission to the Ministry of Education's information literacy task force August 1999
- Teacher training opportunities for librarians in various parts of the country are developed. (Diploma in Tertiary Teaching, Diploma in Teaching (Tertiary), Masters in Education, Certificate in Adult Teaching). Librarians with dual qualifications in library and information management and adult teaching are in high demand.
- COMLA seminar Oct 2000 in Christchurch is on Information Skills.

These are some examples of the commitment to putting a national strategy into actions which challenge and change professional thinking and practice in the workplace.

The changing workplace
This is the part of this paper where I move from a library association's political lobbying strategy to my own reflections as the immediate past Director of an integrated learning centre which included library and information services. (It may be worth noting that since I left the model has been deconstructed so you may not want to take too many notes!)

I confess to being a staunch integrationist! I have never been able to see the learning and research process as anything but a continuum. I don't think we assist the learning process by creating artificial boundaries which are essentially institutionally or professionally defined. Just as there has been convergence in technologies, so too have most of our "libraries" changed radically in the diversity of professional expertise needed to deliver services required. Each institution will have its own special mix to suit the learning and research needs of their particular learning culture. Information services combing IT with library and information services is a typical mix, but integration needs to go far further than this. (Power Point slides in appendices show the changing workplace, changing structures and blurring of traditional boundaries). Professional boundaries are blurring and it is, in my view, taking a particular breed of librarian with a lot of professional maturity to provide leadership in these changing waters.

Observations of common themes in the changing workplace
These are some observations of some typical changes in the thinking relating to information literacy.

- Educational alliances are being developed within organisations. Information literacy is not just a library issue. Team development and delivery is becoming more commonplace, and now academics, learning advisers and IT consultants are also part of the delivery mix
- Librarians are taking the learning process seriously and looking at their own training deficits as teachers. Dual qualifications are highly desirable and library educators are being challenged to respond.
- Acceptance of a broad definition of information literacy is now more widespread, and we seem to have moved from our obsession with definition and the need to own it.
- In the teaching of information literacy there is a shift from teaching skills in isolation to presenting

these within a relevant and useful discipline context as an integrated and assessed component of undergraduate programmes. Information Literacy programmes are receiving the same scrutiny through programme approval processes that are applied to other courses or programmes.

- Information literacy is increasingly seen as an essential part of a graduate's learning profile it is seen as one of the core generic skills essential for learning throughout life.
- There is an increasing realisation that it is a staff learning issue (all staff) as well as a student issue. There are some intricate politics involved in this.
- Library managers are often leading and managing much more diverse professional groups or are part of more complex structures. The stand alone library is becoming an institution of the past.

Conclusion

The process whereby LIANZA has been negotiating a National Information Strategy for New Zealand was used here as an example of how a national political lobbying campaign can have direct relevance in the workplace. It has been argued that a national strategy developed in isolation from the practical implications within an workplace runs the risk of alienating professional support and professional wisdom.

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